



November 19, 2003

Providence man is convicted of gun possession

A federal jury has convicted **Luis Mercado**, 32, of Providence, of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Providence police officers arrested Mercado in February while investigating a disturbance in a parking lot off Bodell Avenue.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty verdict, which the jury returned yesterday in U.S. District Court, Providence, after a two-day trial and approximately two hours of deliberation. Mercado, of #75, 4 Bodell Avenue, is detained at the RI Adult Correctional Institutions pending sentencing, which is scheduled for February 13 before U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi, who presided over the trial.

During the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha presented evidence that, at about 11:45 PM on February 14, Detective Oscar Perez and Patrolman Thomas Zincone were patrolling the Bodell Avenue area in an unmarked police car. They observed a disturbance in a parking lot at 7 Bodell Avenue and went to investigate.

As they approached the scene, Detective Perez saw a man, later identified as Mercado, holding a chrome handgun. Mercado discarded the gun and started to flee but, after Detective Perez retrieved the handgun, a loaded, .22 caliber pistol, both officers tackled Mercado and arrested him.

Mercado has at least two prior felony convictions and, as a felon, is prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms. The statutory maximum penalty for being a felon in

possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Mercado's exact sentence will be determined on the basis of federal sentencing guidelines, which take into account such factors as the specific nature and impact of an offense and the defendant's prior criminal record.

Project Safe Neighborhoods

Providence Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** investigated the case. The U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office coordinated a joint prosecution of the case as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes and gun violence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Neronha is prosecuting the federal case against Mercado. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Pamela Chin is prosecuting the state charges.

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Contact: 401-528-5224

E-mail: thomas.connell@usdoj.gov